

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9466

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 7446

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: MASS, BEXP, BE

SUB: REPLACEMENT FOR BELGIAN F-104G'S

1. DURING CALL ON ECONOMICS MINISTER CLAES ON DECEMBER 21, I TOOK THE OCCASION TO UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BURDENSARING ISSUE IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE. I TOLD CLAES THAT WE APPRECIATED THE POSITIVE ATTITUDE WHICH BELGIUM HAD SO FAR DEMONSTRATED ON THIS ISSUE SINCE IT WAS SO VERY IMPORTANT IN MAINTAINING PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR OUR ATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP.

2. I EXPLAINED TO THE MINISTER THE FEELING THAT NOW THAT EUROPE WAS WEALTHIER THERE SHOULD BE SOME ALTERATION IN OUR SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITIES. I WENT ON TO SAY THAT EUROPE COULD BE HELPFUL BOTH POLITICALLY AND WITH OUT BALANCE OF PAYMENTS BY THE PURCHASE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN OUR COUNTRY. I SPECIFICALLY REFERRED TO PENDING PURCHASES OF REPLACEMENT FOR BELGIAN F-104'S AND SAID THAT WHILE I COULD NOT MAKE A TECHNICAL JUDGEMENT I WAS ASSURED ALL OUR ENTRANTS WERE OF HIGHEST QUALITY. THE MINISTER RESPONDED
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BY SAYING THAT A DECISIOON THIS MATTER WAS SOME TIME AWAY AND THAT THE "DOSSIER" WAS BY NO MEANS COMPLETED. HE WAS

NOT COMPETENT TO DEAL WITH THE MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE MATTER
AND WAS CONCERNED PRIMARILY WITH THE ECONOMICS.

3. HE TOLD ME THE FRENCH HAD MADE A PROPOSAL ON THE F-1,
THE DETAILS OF WHICH WERE BY NO MEANS FILLED IN,
WHICH WOULD CALL FOR CO-PRODUCTION AND CO-DEVELOPMENT.
RESULT IN EFFECT WOULD BE THE INTEGRATION OF
THE BELGIAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY INTO THE FRENCH AIRCRAFT
INDUSTRY. I COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS GOOD OR BAD DEPENDING
ON THE FUTURE FORTUNES OF THE FRENCH INDUSTRY AND THE MINISTER
SEEMED SOMEWHAT UNEASY ABOUT THE ADVISABILITY OF TYING THE
FATE OF THE BELGIAN INDUSTRY TO THE VICISSITUDES OF THE FRENCH.

4. MINISTER CLAES ASSURED ME THAT HE WOULD KEEP OUR INTERESTS
IN THE F-104 REPLACEMENT VERY MUCH IN MIND DURING THE COURSE
OF POLICY FORMULATION ON AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT.
STRAUSZ-HUPE

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